

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-02-11 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on Judicial Branch, Law Enforcement, and Justice

Position: Opponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: Yes

Organization: Indian People's Action

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Written Statement: My experience with "justice" in Montana is that it's good in some ways, and not so good in so many other ways.

Most folks in prison couldn't afford a defense. The District Attorneys need job security - so come after poor people like bulldogs and we have no way of fighting back - or even standing up for ourselves. And they do this with HALF THE FREAKING STORY! Don't talk to defendants. Don't talk to ANYONE WHO KNOWS THE GOOD THEY'VE DONE for their PSI's - or for any reason.

If your child operated on HALF THE STORY, what would you tell them?

As I've mentioned numerous times, justice in Montana stole my retirement account. There is no set bail and ego driven white men in suits can do whatever they want to us out of revenge or having their "authority" questioned. THE DON'T APPEAR TO SEE US AS HUMAN.

Cops stalk us all the time - and for the poorer folks, they are guaranteed to get pulled over, ticketed and fined - setting them deeper into poverty. In my 60 years of life, I've watched cops sit outside reservation lines to get an east ticket to meet their quota. And ruin families - make them go without for their precious fines. What kind of people are we???

Do you know how many lives are ruined by suspending someone's driver's license? Especially when suspended for inability to pay. Or a simple No Insurance Ticket? Sheesh. Most people would PAY if they could. Or should they go without their basic needs so the courts and all the money-making ventures of the Prison Industrial Complex can live comfortably?

Since Public Defenders are there to simply guide us through the system, let's find a less expensive way. Court Advocates would need little education yet provide better quality services than public defenders.

Have you ever watched a low-income person in court? They are terrified. Those people have the power to take them from their families, cause them to lose their only source of income, put them in a cage, mistreat them for years - then go to you and say they helped. DOC doesn't help, it oppresses.

Maybe just remove some of their unbridled power? Cops can beat the shit out of me with no recourse. Parole officers can ruin lives - simply by being lazy or biased. Ditto pre-release.

And can you please look into DOC contracts? It appears they are spending taxpayer money but can't produce a report of the work done - especially in the case of June Ellstad who supposedly did some work in Indian Country, but nobody knows of her.

We just want to live. We're good people - and most in the system ARE good people. Who are sick - with addiction, mental issues, etc. I'd venture to guess 80% of the folks in prison should be in long-term treatment or a mental health facility.

Also, we need to fix our labels! Sex Offender. Violent Offender. Super easy label to get - and one that ruins lives. Maybe we need to look at these cases closer - because many folks with those labels are so much more.

Again, I ask you to PLEASE stop creating POVERTY and calling it JUSTICE and help our brothers and sisters who struggle with addiction, mental health issues and crime.

One more thing. Is it not an Ethics Violation to have the owner of a prison industrial complex business sit on the committee that decides on the funding that his business will eventually get?